

**REGULAR NORTH PROVIDENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 12, 2007**

The North Providence School Committee met on December 12, 2007 at 5:30 p.m. in the Library at the High School. Members present were Chairman Cataldi, Mr. DaSilva, Mrs. Reall, Mr. Marciano, Mr. Martinelli, Mr. Iannetta, and Mr. Palmieri. Also present was Superintendent Ottaviano, Mr. McAllister and Mr. Scungio. Ms. Celona, Mr. Gerardi, Mr. Lynch and Mr. Milazzo were present for the regular session only.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mr. Marciano and Mr. Iannetta and carried to recess the regular session and go into Executive Session at 5:35 p.m. for the purpose of discussing Potential Litigation, Contracts, Personnel Subcommittee Procedures, School Dept Finances and Accounting; Master Plan for Schools, and Utilities and Services.

The meeting reconvened at 6:45 p.m. It began by saluting the flag. Next, Chairman Cataldi asked for a moment of silence.

The first item on the Agenda was Correspondence. There being none, the next item on the Agenda was the Superintendent's Report. Chairman Cataldi asked for the Committee to consent to move the School Committee Reports to the beginning of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the first item on the School Committee Reports was reporting the vote taken by the Committee in Executive Session. It was the unanimous decision of the School Committee to approve the

settlement regarding the personnel matter. Next was Awards Recognition. Chairman Cataldi announced that it is with pleasure that the Committee presents five North Providence students with awards for the 2007 Reserve Cup Challenge. He read the list of recipients and presented each with an award. He also offered congratulations to Susan Bennett, Members of the Committee offered congratulations.

Mr. Iannetta spoke about having the pleasure to work with these students and offered his congratulations on their hard work and dedication.

Next was the Award for RI Middle School Assistant Principal of the Year. Chairman Cataldi spoke about Mr. LaFauci and asked him to come forward to receive his award. Members of the Committee offered congratulations. Mrs. Reall added that we are in the golden age of education in North Providence.

Next was the Birchwood School Gate. Chairman Cataldi read a letter he received from the Town Council regarding the Birchwood gates being open and used as a cut-through. He suggested that the Committee also pass the information on to the police and fire departments as it relates to safety issues and concerns. Mrs. Reall gave a brief history and talked about this issue being passed to her as Chairwoman for the Buildings and grounds some time ago. At that time, she called the chief of police and the fire chief. They informed her that the gates could be closed, but the police and fire

departments would need keys or they would cut the gates to open them. The gate was closed about four hours and someone opened it. Then the issue kept getting bounced back and forth. One of the neighborhood residents, Margaret, spoke on behalf of the neighbors. She first congratulated the students on their awards. Next, she spoke about the petition that the residents on Birchwood Drive signed and the fact that they keep getting bounced back and forth from the Council to the Mayor to the School Committee. She urged the School Committee to take action on this matter. She spoke about living on Birchwood Drive for forty years and the fact that over the years, the problem has gotten worse. There are loud noises and litter. Traffic is driving through stop signs. The stop signs and the speed bumps are just band aids. The problem is a safety issue and it must be rectified. She spoke about Mr. DuPont, a young homeowner that is new to the neighborhood, and safety concerns for young people starting a family.

She spoke about when Mayor Lombardi was campaigning, he said that he would close the gate, but it was never done. She emphasized the importance of closing the gate. Chairman Cataldi asked Margaret if there were times of the year when the problem is worse? She felt that it is worse during the summer. She spoke about Mayor Fossa closing the gate in 1995 and everyone complained so he opened it. She also spoke about the vandalism at Birchwood because the gates are not closed. Chairman Cataldi suggested that the School Committee sit down with the Council from District 2.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. DaSilva and carried to sit down with the Council to discuss the issue and get back to the neighbors by the weekend to let them know when the meeting will take place. He added that the School Committee closed the gate at some point and the Mayor's office opened it back up again. Mr. Martinelli asked if the School Committee is obligated to keep the gate open? Chairman Cataldi said that he did not know and that we need more information. Mr. Milazzo spoke about the athletic teams being at the school at night. Chairman Cataldi felt that the issue has been thrown around enough and it is time to get it resolved. He promised the neighbors that the School Committee is not "passing the buck" and will address the issue. Mr. Martinelli asked Mr. Milazzo if there has to be a way in and a way out of the school parking lot? Mr. Milazzo said that he was told that during school hours, both gates have to be open. Mr. Aiello spoke about needing to address this issue immediately. Chairman Cataldi asked Mr. Aiello to wait until the appropriate part of the agenda to comment on this issue.

Next was the Personnel Subcommittee procedures. Mr. Martinelli asked that this item be deferred until next month. He passed out a copy of his request to the members of the committee so that they could look at his proposal before the next meeting.

Next was School Department Finances and Accounts. Mr. Martinelli asked for a list of all the accounts. He added that the list was very detailed. He asked for clarification on some of the information in the

list, including the North Providence High School Accounts. He asked if all the accounts were on page 3 of the list. Superintendent Ottaviano stated that the list is all-inclusive. Mr. Martinelli stated that he felt like his requests are being obstructed and that they are using tactics. Chairman Cataldi read Mr. Martinelli's request for information and asked him what information he asked for that was not included in the list? Mr. Martinelli spoke about receiving a memo on November 29th but it not being on the agenda to be discussed. Mr. Aiello began yelling at the Committee and Chairman Cataldi asked him to take his seat so that the Committee could continue discussion. Mr. Martinelli began asking questions about the accounts beginning with the Birchwood School Store. He felt that he would like a brief statement of the purpose of each account and why we have that account. Mrs. Celona asked for clarification as to exactly what Mr. Martinelli wanted. She added that all the student accounts are for student activities and fundraising. They get donations and they use the money for field trips, etc. Generally, the money they raise is for their student activities. It is used for anything in the school for the children. When you get to the high school, there are accounts for each department. The department uses the money for their department. Mrs. Celona asked how much information Mr. Martinelli would like to see on the list? Mr. Martinelli asked if the information she gave applies to the school store. Mrs. Celona stated that it does. He next asked if it applies to the athletic department. Mrs. Celona stated that it does. She asked Mr. Martinelli what he was asking for. Mr. Martinelli stated that he wanted to make sure that the money is being used for the

intended purpose. Mrs. Celona explained that all the accounts have a federal id number and are audited. The sunshine fund is also audited.

Mr. Martinelli stated that this was the first time he received any information on this in three years. He next asked if there is a way to distinguish what money belongs to what account. He next asked if he could get information regarding the accounts that are 90-120 days overdue. He added that he is not in a hurry for the information so whenever she can get to it. Mr. Martinelli also asked for a brief description of each scholarship and a brief description of what the purpose of the account is as well as who has authority to use the account. Superintendent Ottaviano stated that people donate money throughout the course of the year so the money is in the account. Mr. Marciano asked for clarification. He said that he donates money to the scholarship directly to the student and asked if he should not be doing it that way. Mrs. Celona stated that was fine.

Next was the NPHS Bleachers Repair. Chairman Cataldi spoke about asking for a professional opinion as to the safety of the bleachers. He read the letter from the Fire Marshal and the Trust. Mr. Martinelli stated that he disagrees with his colleagues as to the importance of the bleachers and felt that it is not a priority. He asked Mr. Milazzo if there was an OSHA report. Mr. Milazzo stated that OSHA did not come in and that it may open a whole can of worms. Mr. Martinelli felt that the priority should be to comply with the report. If the bleachers can be repaired, then so be it. However, the priority needs to be installing security cameras to the outside of the middle school, fix the

bathrooms that need to be repaired, fix or replace the fire escapes. There is a \$351,000.00 capital improvements budget and we are in the process of sending a letter to the Mayor to move forward with the repairs. He felt that the bleachers are not as important and should not be addressed until all the other issues are addressed. He added that the bleachers should not be opened.

Next was the Superintendent's Report. First was the Request for Records Policy. Mr. Martinelli asked to defer this until next month.

Motion by Mr. Martinelli, seconded by Mr. Palmieri to defer until legal counsel can answer all the questions. No vote was taken on this.

Mr. DaSilva asked who put the policy together? Chairman Cataldi stated that it was legal counsel. Mr. Marciano asked Mr. Martinelli if there was a certain portion of the policy that he is concerned with? Mr. Martinelli felt that there are questions that he needs addressed. Mr. Marciano felt that perhaps the matter should be deferred until next month.

Next was the Affirmative Action Policy. Mr. Martinelli spoke about the memo from July 22nd regarding the language in the policy. Superintendent Ottaviano explained that the language in the hiring policy is in accordance with state law.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall to accept the Policy.

Mr. Martinelli spoke about the words marital/parental. Mr. Scungio stated that the Department of Education requires that the School Committees to use language addressing Title 9. Mr. Martinelli asked if we can add “being married or being a parent”. Mr. Scungio said that the policy is intended to prevent the School Department from employing someone based on marital status or children. Mr. Martinelli felt that it is important to attach Mr. Scungio’s memo in the Title 9 package. After discussion, Mr. DaSilva withdrew his motion.

Next was Field Trip Requests. Mr. Gerardi recommended approval of the Field Trip Requests as submitted and in accordance with School Committee policy. Mrs. Reall asked Mr. Gerardi if he felt comfortable with the field trip to Miami. Mr. Gerardi stated that it is a long distance but the topic of the conference is an important one and the right people are organizing the trip.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and Mrs. Reall and carried to approve the requests and provide a list for the wrestling team of sponsors and to provide the list to the superintendent

Next was Home Schooling Requests. Mr. Lynch recommended approval of the home schooling request by Kathleen & Manuel Silva for Henry Maxwell Silva (Grade 7).

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to

approve the Home Schooling Request as submitted.

Next was the Restraint Policy. Mr. Lynch stated that the Policy is mandatory for all School Districts. He asked that the Committee take the Policy under advisement and come back in January. The Policy is under federal law guidelines. Mr. Martinelli asked if the policy is necessary. Mr. Lynch stated that it is necessary and required by law.

Next was the Monthly Financial Report. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the December 12, 2007 Monthly Financial Report as submitted.

Motion by Mrs. Reall, seconded by Mr. DaSilva and carried to approve the December 12, 2007 Monthly Financial Report as submitted.

Next was Public Comments on Agenda Items 3-5. First, Mr. Aiello identified himself and asked about the Finances and Accounts. He asked for clarification on the accounts and if any checks were made out to cash. Chairman Cataldi stated that there are none. He also asked how people are paid. Mr. DaSilva said that everyone is paid by check. Mr. Aiello next asked if the monthly financial report is a public document. Superintendent Ottaviano stated that it is. He wished everyone happy holidays.

Next Mr. Vanasse spoke about the Birchwood Gate issue. He spoke about it being a problem for all the surrounding neighborhoods.

There is speeding and going over everyone's lawns. He urged the Committee to close the gate and felt that it is the nexus for the Town.

Next was Requests to Address the Committee.

Mr. Priscaro thanked the Committee for allowing him to address them. He felt that he would like to make AFLAC available to everyone. There is no cost to the Town and is an employee-paid benefit. He added that there are a variety of benefits and that members of the School Committee are also eligible. Mr. DaSilva asked if the cost is payroll deducted. He also asked if there is enough room on the payroll slips. Mrs. Celona said that there is. Mr. Martinelli asked if the policy was the same offered to the state. Mr. Priscaro stated that is.

The next item on the Agenda was New Business.

First was Resignations. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the resignation, which was voted on as follows:

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mr. Iannetta and carried to approve the resignation of Lisa Birkett – Head Coach – Girls Lacrosse Team North Providence High School effective November 20, 2007.

Next was Appointments. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the Committee grant advice and consent to the appointments,

which were voted on as follows:

Motion by Mr. Iannetta, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to grant advice and consent to the appointment of Cheril Smith – Special Educator (Severe/Profound) Centredale School Effective December 13, 2007; and Gina Sollitto – Elementary Librarian Centredale/Greystone effective January 2, 2008. Members of the Committee offered congratulations to the appointees that were present in the audience.

Next was Old Business. There being none, the next item on the Agenda was Use of Property Requests.

Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Use of Property Requests as submitted in the December 12, 2007 School Committee Packets based on availability and the requests meeting all the necessary requirements.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to accept the Superintendent's Recommendation for Use of Property Requests as presented.

Next was Approval of Bills. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended that the N. Providence School Department List of Bills dated December 6, 2007 as amended be accepted and paid.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded Mrs. Reall and carried that the N. Providence School Department List of Bills dated December 6, 2007 be paid as amended.

Next was Approval of Minutes.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried that the Minutes of the November 7, 2007 School Committee Executive Session be approved as presented and kept closed in accordance with R.I.G.L. 42-44-4 and 42-44-5.

Motion by Mrs. Reall, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried that the Minutes of the November 7, 2007 North Providence School Committee Special Meeting be approved as presented.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried that the Minutes of the November 14, 2007 North Providence School Committee Executive Session be approved as presented and kept closed in accordance with R.I.G.L. 42-44-4 and 42-44-5.

Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried that the Minutes of the November 14, 2007 North Providence School Committee Regular Meeting be approved as presented.

Next was Public Comments on Agenda Items 7-12.

The next item on the Agenda was Pending Business. Mr. Palmieri read a statement expressing concerns with the state of the elementary schools and felt that they are antiquated. Steps need to be taken to make sure that the elementary school children are given the same as the middle and high school children. The repairs are over a million dollars. He felt that the Committee must proceed with an eye towards the future. He felt that to band aid the repairs would not be the best way to proceed. He felt that it would be better to consolidate the six schools into three and that it would be the best option. He felt that there should be committee of representatives including some town council people to look into the research and planning. He felt that it is time to bring the elementary schools into the 21st century.

Motion by Mr. Palmieri, seconded by Mr. Martinelli and carried to go to the Town Council with a proposal and with a feasibility study to look into the costs.

Mr. Marciano complimented Mr. Palmieri on his work. He felt that before we know how much we need, we need to get together with a committee. Then come back with a report and recommendation. Mrs. Reall felt that it is a good idea to get the community together and felt that everyone needs to be informed. Chairman Cataldi added that the Town needs to be in financial shape to be able to get the money. We have no idea where the Town is financially and the bond has to be based on financial stability. He felt that the Committee should move

forward.

Motion by Mrs. Reall, seconded by Mr. Martinelli and carried to ask Mr. Palmieri to spearhead the Committee. Chairman Cataldi suggested that the Committee also include professional people.

A member of the audience, Tammy Leva, asked questions of the Committee. She spoke about the fact that none of the schools are overcrowded. She felt that it would be a mistake to reduce all six schools all at once and felt that there should be six schools.

Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mrs. Reall and carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald Iannetta